



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

### **TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN**

**March 5, 2013**

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### ***House Bill 6525 - An Act Establishing a Childhood Obesity Task Force***

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House Bill 6515 would establish a task force that will address childhood obesity in Connecticut. The proposed task force would guide Connecticut in establishing priority, evidence-based strategies aimed at decreasing childhood obesity rates in the state. The Department of Public Health respectfully requests being included as part of the membership of this task force. The Department can offer data and provide policy recommendations.

A recent study by the Department found that about one third of Connecticut children in kindergarten and third grade are overweight or obese and about one out of every seven are obese. The study was conducted with a sample of over 8,000 students in 74 elementary schools across the state from 2010 – 2011, and found that about 41% of non-Hispanic black and 43% of Hispanic children were overweight or obese, compared to 27% of non-Hispanic white children. The rates of overweight or obesity were similar among boys and girls. Obesity rates are significantly higher in lower income community schools.

The results of this study illustrate the alarming rate of childhood obesity, especially among high risk groups such as low-income, black and Hispanic children. Obesity is a major risk factor for chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Children who are overweight or obese are more likely to develop these serious chronic diseases at earlier ages that lead to premature disability, early death, loss of productivity and decreased quality of life.

Over the past 30 years, the childhood obesity rate in America has almost tripled. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2010, approximately 17 percent of children and adolescents aged 2-19 years were already obese.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.

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